



Frequently Asked Questions

November 2021

General Questions about the Program

Q: What is the Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation?

A: The U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) is a State Department administered by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs' Cultural Heritage Center. The program awards grants through U.S. embassies in developing countries for the preservation of cultural sites, objects, collections, and forms of traditional expression, such as music and language.

Q: What are some examples of the kinds of cultural preservation projects supported?

A: The AFCP supports projects to preserve cultural heritage in three priority funding areas or categories: Cultural Sites, Cultural Objects and Collections, and Forms of Traditional Cultural Expression. Some examples are:

- preservation of historic buildings and sites having architectural, artistic, historical, or other cultural (non-religious) importance
- needs assessment and conservation of museum collections
- archaeological site preservation
- documentation of vanishing traditional craft techniques
- improved environmental conditions for preventive conservation of archives and manuscripts
- documentation of indigenous languages threatened with extinction

AFCP's three focus areas established by Congress to align with the classifications used by professionals worldwide to describe cultural heritage:

AFCP Focus Areas	Tangible Heritage		Intangible Heritage
	<i>Moveable</i>	<i>Immoveable</i>	
Cultural Sites		X	
Cultural Objects & Collections	X		
Forms of Traditional Cultural Expression			X

Within each AFCP focus area, the Center has established the following reporting categories:

Cultural Sites	
Archaeological Sites	Places above ground, underground, or under water recognized as being of particular architectural, artistic, historical, or other cultural (non-religious) interest that preserve the physical remains of past human activities
Historic Buildings and Sites	Structures and sites made by humans recognized as being of architectural, artistic, historical, or other cultural (non-religious) interest that are occupied, used, or intended for supporting or sheltering a function
Cultural Objects & Collections	
Archaeological Collections	Groups of objects made or shaped by humans that have been scientifically removed from an archaeological site, can be seen, or studied, and are typically kept together
Ethnographic Objects	Traditional utilitarian, ceremonial, devotional, or other objects important to the cultural heritage of a people because of their distinctive characteristics, comparative rarity, or their contribution to the knowledge of the origins, development, or history of that people
General Museum Conservation	An array of activities intended to preserve and protect objects and collections in a museum setting, such as conservation needs assessments, improvements to environmental and storage conditions, and collections safety and security improvements, etc.
Manuscripts	Books, compositions, or other documents that are written by hand (not mechanically reproduced)
Paintings & Sculpture	Artistic compositions made by applying paints to a two-dimensional surface (paintings, including murals and frescoes) or by carving wood, molding plaster, casting metals, etc., in relief or in the round (sculptures)
Photographic & Film Collections	Groups of images recorded by a camera onto an emulsion and reproduced as positive prints or paper or kept as negatives or transparencies
Forms of Traditional Cultural Expression	

Crafts	Activities involving the skilled use of one's hands to produce carpets, boats, mats, furniture, clothing, jewelry, household items, tools, hardware, and utilitarian and other objects traditionally associated with a culture
Dance	A series of motions and steps traditionally associated with a culture and usually performed to music
Drama	Prose or verse compositions traditionally associated with a culture that tell stories and are intended for representation by actors impersonating characters and performing the dialogue and action
Languages	Systems traditionally associated with a culture that combine voice sounds, gestures, or written symbols to communicate thoughts and feelings
Music	Vocal or instrumental expressions traditionally associated with a culture that consist of tones organized melodically, harmonically, and rhythmically
Ceremonies	Ceremonial acts traditionally associated with and practiced by a culture, usually on important days of the year or on special occasions in the lives of individuals or communities, such as marriages and harvests
Traditional Knowledge	Scientific, engineering, architectural, medicinal, culinary, and other practical experience traditionally associated with a culture, often accumulated through trial and error over time and passed down from one generation to the next

Questions about who can request support

Q: Who can request AFCP support?

A: U.S. ambassadors in eligible countries, in partnership with qualified entities, may request support through AFCP. Qualified entities are reputable and accountable non-governmental organizations, museums, ministries of culture, or similar institutions and organizations that can demonstrate that they have the requisite experience and capacity to manage projects to preserve cultural heritage in collaboration with the national cultural authority in the host country.

Q: Can individuals or commercial entities receive AFCP support?

A: Only non-governmental organizations, museums, ministries of culture, or similar institutions are eligible to receive AFCP support.

Q: What are the deadlines for submitting applications for support?

A: The Round 1 deadline is 27 November 2021.

Q: Can U.S.-based NGOs, museums, and similar institutions participate in the AFCP program? Can they receive AFCP support?

A: Unlike many of the exchange programs in the U.S. Department of State, the Bureau neither actively recruits nor requires U.S. participation in AFCP-supported projects overseas. However, AFCP grant recipients may enter into contracts with U.S. citizens and U.S.-based companies and organizations for goods and services required for the successful completion of their projects—especially when they require expertise or supplies and equipment unavailable in their own country or region—but the recipients are also free to hire local consultants or consultants from other countries provided they meet published U.S. Government eligibility requirements (OMB Circular 2 CFR Part 200). Further, U.S.-based NGOs, museums, universities, and similar institutions may receive AFCP support for projects to preserve cultural heritage overseas. However, the AFCP does not support independent U.S. projects abroad, and U.S.-based entities must demonstrate that they are working in full partnership with the national cultural authority in the host country.

Q: What other eligibility requirements must AFCP applicants meet?

A: Applicants must meet the following requirements once they have successfully passed Round 1. However, given the time sensitive nature of these tasks, we encourage you to begin the registration process early. To apply for grants through AFCP, all applicants must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), such as a Dun & Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System or D-U-N-S® Number, which is a contractor identification code required by the federal government for all procurement-related activities, including grants. [Note: As of April 2022, a DUNS is not required. Each entity registering or renewing in SAM.gov is automatically assigned a UEI through that system.]

All applicants must also have an active registration in SAM.gov (System for Award Management), the official U.S. Government system for entities interested in conducting business with the U.S. Government. SAM.gov combines several federal procurement systems, notably the Central Contractor Registry (CCR), the Online Representations and Certifications Application (ORCA), and the Excluded Parties List System (EPLS). Please note that all non-U.S. entities must also have a NATO Commercial and Governmental Entity (NCAGE) Code, a unique identifier assigned to suppliers to various government and defense agencies.

Vetting of applicants for AFCP grants is carried out at post and in compliance with OMB guidelines to agencies on government-wide debarment and suspension and other guidelines published in the

Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (OMB Circular 2 CFR Part 200).

The DOS Federal Assistance Policy Handbook and 2 CFR Part 200 require due diligence prior to award to evaluate applicants' capabilities and the suitability of their organizations for assistance and to assess risk (operational, financial, internal control, and terrorism risk). The State Department requires a collective effort of its responsible officers "to make every reasonable effort to guard against the risk that U.S. government activities could inadvertently benefit those whom we mean to counter or marginalize terrorist groups, their members, or their supporters." The two federal lists of debarred entities—the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) list and the General Services Administration's Excluded Parties List System (EPLS) have been fully absorbed into SAM.gov noted above.

Questions about the Review and Selection Process

Q: How does the application review and selection process work?

A: In Round 1, the selection committee rates all complete applications based on the comprehensive project description, maintenance plan, and budget; the clarity of the project design (i.e. the extent to which the proposed activities correspond with the desired goals); and the quality and quantity of supporting materials, such as resumes of the key project participants, images of the resource; and **notices of official permission from the responsible cultural steward**, such as a Ministry of Culture.

Questions about Money and Funding

Q: Are there limits to the amount of funding that embassies can request?

A: Beginning in FY 2021, the Center established an award ceiling of \$500,000. The minimum amount an embassy can request is \$10,000.

Q: Is cost sharing required?

A: Cost sharing is not required, but in-kind contributions and other forms of cost participation are welcome.

Questions about Cultural Sites and Objects Having a Religious Connection

Q: Does the AFCP support the preservation of cultural sites having a religious connection?

A: The AFCP has supported projects to preserve sites having a religious connection, such as churches and mosques. In most cases, the sites are in states of ruin and preserved as such or are no longer serving their original purposes and are preserved as historical monuments. The sites are nominated and selected solely on their architectural, artistic, historical, or cultural (non-religious) merit.

Q: How does the AFCP support the preservation of cultural sites having a religious connection without violating the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution and the separation of Church and State?

A: In January 2003, the U.S. Department of State received guidance from the Office of Legal Counsel at the Department of Justice (OLC/DOJ) on the use of federal funds to preserve items of cultural importance which have a religious connection. That guidance, below, is provided to eligible U.S. embassies wishing to submit project applications to the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP):

SPECIAL NOTE REGARDING SITES AND OBJECTS THAT HAVE A RELIGIOUS CONNECTION: The establishment clause of the U.S. Constitution permits the government to include religious objects and sites within an aid program under certain conditions. For example, an item with a religious connection (including a place of worship) may be the subject of a cultural preservation grant if the item derives its primary significance and is nominated solely on the basis of architectural, artistic, historical, or other cultural (not religious) criteria. Posts considering preservation projects with a religious connection are encouraged to contact the Cultural Heritage Center at (202) 632-6301 (ECA/P/C) with any questions.

AFCP program policies which support this guidance include the following:

- AFCP supports the preservation of cultural sites whose significance rests solely on their secular architectural, artistic, historical, or cultural (non-religious) merit. Such sites have included churches and mosques many of which are considered ruins and no longer in active use.
- Embassy partners include non-governmental organizations, museums, ministries of culture, or similar institutions that can demonstrate that they are accountable and have the requisite experience and capacity to manage projects to preserve cultural heritage
- AFCP is active in less developed countries, regardless of religion, whose participation is based on their rank in the United Nations Human Development Index, an international index which is composed from per-capita GDP and other statistical data collected by the U.N. Development Programme.

Q: How does the State Department ensure that AFCP funds are not diverted to religious purposes?

A: AFCP program policies and administrative mechanisms are in place to safeguard against the diversion of the federal funds to religious purposes separate from the program's secular objectives of cultural preservation. Those safeguards include prohibitions against funding support for, among other things:

- Preservation or purchase of privately or commercially owned cultural objects, collections, or real property, including those whose transfer from private or commercial to public ownership is envisioned, planned, or in process but not complete at the time of application submission.

- Construction of new buildings.
- Commissions of new works of art or architecture for commemorative or economic development purposes.
- Creation of replicas or re-creation of cultural objects or sites that no longer exist.
- Awards to individuals or commercial entities.

These and other funding prohibitions appear in AFCP NOFOs under the headings “Ineligible Activities” or “Restrictions,” and they are used in the pre-review screening process to determine technical eligibility.

Other administrative safeguards include mandatory biannual reporting of project activities and spending on the part of the recipient; mandatory prior approval by the grants officer and the AFCP program office for all post-award changes in project activities, project scope, project budget, and project personnel in compliance with the Agency Rule (both uniform administrative requirements and cost principles); and site visits by State Department officials during the project.

AFCP policies on eligibility and funding are consistent with other policies, legal opinions, and case law regarding the use of federal funds for the preservation of cultural sites having a religious connection, including those of other agencies whose programs may award grants for the preservation of religious properties in the United States and U.S. Territories under certain conditions.

Questions about Private and Commercial Personal and Real Property

Q: Does the AFCP support projects that focus on commercially or privately owned cultural objects or sites?

A: No. The AFCP does not support the preservation of commercially or privately owned cultural heritage.

Q: What about objects or sites owned by a private trust?

A: Cultural sites and objects owned by a private trust are considered private property and are thus not eligible for support through the AFCP program.

Q: What if the objects or sites are owned by a family or a private or commercial entity but are made available to the public?

A: Even though many cultures have long traditions of family ownership of cultural heritage, that heritage is still privately owned and thus not eligible to receive support from the AFCP program. This prohibition applies even to privately owned heritage that is accessible or made available to the public.

Q. What if privately owned objects or sites will be transferred to public ownership upon the award of an AFCP grant?

A: AFCP does not support the preservation of cultural heritage that is privately owned, even if a commitment is pending to donate objects or sites. Transfers of property must take place prior to the submission of AFCP requests for funding to preserve that property.

Q: What about ethnographic objects like masks, carvings, and textiles, some of which are in museums but important examples of which are in private hands?

A: Even when the owners of objects are willing to participate and share their resources, the AFCP does not support work on those objects. In such cases, embassies must focus their applications only on those objects whose ownership status is neither private nor commercial. This restriction applies to inventory of objects as well as to their treatment.

Questions about Newspapers and Other News Media

Q: Does the AFCP support projects to preserve news media or news reels?

A: No. The AFCP does not support projects to preserve newspapers, magazines, news radio and television recordings, or other news media. The AFCP recognizes that news media are very important sources of historical information and highly susceptible to deterioration if not properly handled and stored, but the information they transmit often extends beyond the limits of what AFCP can support (namely, the preservation of cultural sites, cultural objects and collections, and forms of traditional cultural expression such as traditional music and dance), and their value stems from the information they transmit, not from their materials (paper, film) or their methods of construction (made by hand, etc.).

Questions about Digitization

Q: Does the AFCP support projects to scan or otherwise digitize cultural heritage?

A: No. The AFCP supports such activities only in cases where such activities are part of a larger, clearly defined physical conservation effort. Although digitization offers an extremely effective means of expanding access to cultural information, it is not a sustainable preservation activity in its own right. Video tapes, diskettes, CDs, DVDs, and other digital storage media are susceptible to damage from extremes and fluctuations in temperature, exposure to the elements, chemical leaks, magnetic disturbance, and improper handling and use. They deteriorate at unpredictable rates but seldom show any outward signs of deterioration. Physical damage to these media is irreversible. These media, furthermore, depend on a reliable electrical supply and fully operable machinery and equipment for maximum use and effectiveness. The AFCP gives priority to applications that directly address the physical preservation and protection needs of cultural objects and sites or that contribute to the preservation of tangible or intangible heritage in sustainable ways. The AFCP program will consider applications that involve digitization only if that activity is part of a larger, comprehensive effort to ensure the physical preservation and protection of cultural heritage.